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SUBJECT: ETHIOPIA PRESSURING ERITREA ON BORDER IMPASSE

Classified By: AMBASSADOR DONALD YAMAMOTO FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

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Letter to the Eritreans  
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¶1. (S/NF) Ethiopian State Minister of Foreign Affairs Tekeda Alemu privately informed the Ambassador September 19 that Ethiopia will shortly send a letter to Eritrean President Isaias, with copies to the Permanent Members of the United Nations Security Council, calling on Eritrea to abide by the Algiers Accord in removing its troops from the Temporary Security Zone (TSZ) and lifting restrictions on UNMEE operations in the monitoring of the TSZ as required under UNSC Resolution 1640 and subsequent UNSC resolutions. The letter will also outline encroachments into the TSZ by Eritrean troops and actions Eritrea is taking to undercut regional stability. The letter will conclude that if Eritrea does not remove its troops from the TSZ, Ethiopia will take &legal and political8 measures with the international community to seek relief. The letter will have a covering diplomatic note that will highlight Ethiopia,s commitment to the final and binding nature of the delimitation decision by the EEBC in 2002 and its commitment to the demarcation process, but note the violations by Eritrea prevents forward movement on the border.

¶2. (S/NF) The Ambassador raised with Tekeda that the EEBC (Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission) meeting at the Hague on September 6 ended with no positive resolution of the border impasse. Further, the letter presented to the EEBC by Ethiopia,s American lawyer, Mr. Don Picard, criticized the EEBC and the Eritreans without stating clearly what Ethiopia was doing to push the demarcation process forward. The Ambassador strongly suggested a positive statement of Ethiopia,s commitment to see the demarcation to a final conclusion would be well received by the international community.

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Avoid War, Remain in the EEBC Process  
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¶3. (S/NF) Tekeda told the Ambassador that Ethiopia does not wish and will not, at this time, drop out of the EEBC process. Further, actions it will take to force Eritrea to

respect the TSZ will be "legal and political" pressure. Tekeda said he was taken aback by the rumors of impending conflict between the two countries. If there is a war, it will not be Ethiopia that will start it. Ethiopia continues to maintain defensive positions. Ambassador replied that an Ethiopian statement of a peaceful resolution of the border impasse would be helpful in easing the war rumors.

¶4. (S/NF) Tekeda added that while Eritrean President Isaias poses a security threat to regional stability, the consequences of yet another war between Eritrea and Ethiopia would have far ramifications for regional stability. The clear message from Tekeda was that Ethiopia would not start a war and that the international community must pressure Eritrea to avoid conflict.

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Final Note  
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¶5. (S/NF) A Meles to Isaias letter could have the negative effect of reinforcing the image conveyed by Ethiopia's lawyer, Don Picard, at The Hague (para 2) that Ethiopia is an impediment to the resolution of the border problem, and could potentially have the adverse effect of heightening tensions. Resumption of conflict would have devastating effects for the countries and the stability of the region.

¶6. (S/NF) Ambassador and Embassy will follow-up this meeting with discussions with other senior GOE officials on the border and the importance of Ethiopia to remain committed to the demarcation process, to seek ways to limit the risk of war, and to advocate in positive terms the importance of finding a resolution to the fundamental problems which divide

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the two countries.

¶7. (S/NF) Post has sent by septel ideas for breaking the border impasse and to set a more positive tone between the two countries. Finally, post believes it is critical to ensure that the international community does not adopt any provocative action or implement any restrictions in support of the pending November 2007 deadline by the EEBC on the final demarcation by map coordinates. Leaving the final resolution of the demarcation of the border to the parties and placing the emphasis on the parties to resolve their bilateral differences will help prevent tensions and avoid a potential conflict between Eritrea and Ethiopia.

YAMAMOTO